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Atari Online News, Etc.  
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Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor  
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor  
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor  
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"  
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"  
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"  
Rob Mahlert -- Web site  
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Djordje Vukovic  
Fred Horvat

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~ Click Fraud Settlement ~ Fake Google Site Woes! ~ MS WGA Annoyance?  
~ New Adult Web Hangout! ~ Wireless Mighty Mouse! ~ Professor Prank Bust!

-\* TeraDesk Update Now Available \*-  
-\* Yahoo To Offer Norton Security Tool \*-  
-\* US Tops Lists of 'Dirty Dozen' Spam Nations \*-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard  
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

I'm still a firm believer in the adage that "It's not the heat, it's the humidity!" What a week! I knew that I should have gone golfing last Monday because it was the most bearable day of the week. However, I played on Tuesday instead. And then, a friend from where I used to work called (while I was playing Tuesday!) and wanted to know if I wanted to play Thursday. Of course, I said yes. We played down close to Cape Cod, and we were melting! Still, it was fun on both days.

Still no luck with this "new" DSL service that we hooked up recently. I'm telling you, I've never seen anything like this. We've been lucky if we've managed to have access to it for an hour daily. I've made more calls to their tech support than should be necessary, with no resolution to whatever the problem might be. The best that I've accomplished so far is to get a credit on my future bill. So, I can't make any real observations about the speed differences yet other than to say my Atari online use (at 19,200 baud) was much more reliable!

If things go as planned, I should get the opportunity to see my father, brother, and meet my "new" sister-in-law this weekend. We had to cancel last weekend due to the weather, but this weekend doesn't have any torrential downpours forecast! So, we'll see what happens.

I have a couple of apologies to make. First of all, to all of our e-mail subscribers, we've been experiencing problems with our atarinews.org server and e-mail hasn't been successfully forwarded from there for a few weeks. However, until the new server is online, the old one has been cleaned up. Hopefully, this will have resolved our distribution issues for the present. Additionally, this week's issue is getting out late due to some unbelievably strong thunderstorms going through my area as I'm putting the final touches on it. As a result, I haven't been able to get online to get final articles, etc. So, we'll forego those, clean up a bit, and wait for the phone lines to clear up (yes, my DSL is still a mess!).

Until next time...

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Version 3.84 of TeraDesk open-source desktop is available at:

<http://solair.eunet.yu/~vdjole/teradesk.htm>

Two not very important bugs were fixed and several small optimizations were made.

See the history file for more information.

Have fun.

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->A-ONE User Group Notes!    -   Meetings, Shows, and Info!
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The Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus Atari Swap!

Well folks, it is getting to that time of year again. The Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus are holding their annual Atari Swap meet and Sale. It is going to be on Saturday September the 9th. It will be at the same time and place as before. For further information please go to [acec.atari.org](http://acec.atari.org)

Hope to see you there.

Link: <http://acec.atari.org/>

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
joe@atarinews.org

[Editor's note: Due to the sparseness of messages in comp.sys.atari.st this week, there won't be a column this week. Stay tuned...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Wii May Trump PlayStation3?
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!  
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# Nintendo's Wii May Trump PlayStation 3

A new report from the online edition of Business Week has highlighted the coming battle for consumer dollars between Sony and Nintendo following each company's next-generation console offering to be released this fall. In particular, the report noted that while the PlayStation 2 still maintains control over the current console market, Nintendo could build upon the runaway success of its DS handheld with the Wii in its attempt to usurp the throne from Sony and its significantly higher priced PlayStation 3.

Earlier this week Nintendo announced Japanese hardware sales of 2,340,000 units of both the original Nintendo DS and new DS Lite in the last three months, as well as 1,420,000 in Europe and 780,000 in North America. In addition, the company released equally impressive lifetime sales numbers as well for both iterations of the handheld, which put it at 9,240,000 in Japan, 6,130,000 in Europe and 5,900,000 in North America. This adds up to a worldwide title of 21,270,000 units after around a year and a half on sale.

Another factor noted in the report which could play to Nintendo's advantage during the next hardware cycle is its emphasis on games aimed at a wider audience than that of its competitors in Sony and Microsoft. The company's recently launched Touch Generations label, which is used worldwide to differentiate its particularly 'mainstream'-oriented titles such as those in the Brain Training series, has seen phenomenal success by offering different types of experiences that cannot be had on other platforms, including Sony's PSP. According to information released earlier this month by Japanese firm Enterbrain, Brain Training For Adults was ranked as the overall top-selling title in Japan for the first half of 2006.

"Non-gamers are coming back because there are interesting games people want to play," commented Hiroshi Kamide, an analyst at KBC Securities in Tokyo. "The PSP is a beautiful piece of kit but the games are just rehashes of what you would play on the console."

However, the Business Week report was quick to point out that it remains to be seen if Nintendo can replicate the success that it has enjoyed within the handheld market with its upcoming Wii platform. The company has struggled in the sector with its current console offering, and noted this week that hardware sales for the GameCube during the three months ended

June 30th, 2006 amounted to only 10,000 units in Japan, while Europe and North America saw sales of 40,000 and 100,000 units respectively.

Additionally, the report also noted that hardcore gamers are still more likely to prefer the 'raw power' afforded by the PlayStation 3, and that some analysts are still not convinced that the Wii be able to trump the PlayStation 3 once both consoles are released to the public. Yuta Sakurai, an analyst at Nomura Securities in Tokyo, commented in a note to clients on July 25 that he foresees the PlayStation 3 selling through 71 million units by 2011, as compared to the Wii's 40 million.

However, the analyst did note the appeal of the Wii, as well as other hardware offering from Nintendo by stating, "Software developers are increasingly interested in creating games for these Nintendo platforms."

### Old-School Games on Xbox Live

The Xbox 360 is the most advanced video game console on the market right now. But apparently, high-def graphics and stereo surround sound aren't enough for everyone.

Microsoft Corp. recently began a promotion to showcase a "new" retro game each Wednesday on its Xbox Live Arcade casual games service. A subscription to Xbox Live, the company's online service, is required to download and play.

I checked out several titles available such as the recently added "Frogger," as well as a few classics that have been available on Xbox Live Arcade for a while now like "Robotron: 2084" and "Joust."

For the most part, these arcade games capture the look, sound and feel of the originals, sans a quarter slot.

And several things make the updates better: the ability to play "Frogger," for example, on a high-def widescreen TV with others in cooperative multiplayer online mode was even more addicting than playing alone.

You can also compare high scores on an online leaderboard to see who's best at dodging speeding traffic and hopping over floating logs and turtles.

The graphics aren't going to win any awards, but "Frogger" gets a bit of a facelift with richer colors and more detailed graphics. Some, however, might miss the blocky graphics of the original.

"Joust" and "Robotron: 2084" were similarly fun retro games offered available for download.

Last week's release doesn't really fit into Microsoft's old-school lineup, but it's a good game nonetheless.

"Cloning Clyde" is a new side-scrolling title where you play a human who tries to escape from a cloning lab by morphing into mutant chickens and frog creatures. Each animal-human hybrid gives your character unique abilities needed to navigate the mazelike levels.

The upcoming release schedule looks even more promising with the space shooter "Galaga" (one of my all-time favorite games), the brawler "Street

Fighter II: Hyper Fighting" and the dot-munching "Pac-Man."

But these games, old as most of them are, are a bit pricey at \$5 to \$15 each. That's a lot of quarters.

Buying the games is itself a process in currency conversion. You have to first buy "Microsoft Points" which you can then redeem on games and other items on Xbox Live.

I spent \$27.06 (tax included) for 2000 points, enough to buy four games and still have a few hundred points left over. This is on top of the \$50 a year for my Xbox Live Gold membership.

That's a lot of money, considering the seemingly endless number of classic compilations already available for consoles. Many of them cram dozens of games on one disk for about same price as the four games I purchased.

The PC, meanwhile, already has subscription services like the excellent GameTap, which for about \$10 a month has more than 500 classic games available including "Pac-Man" and "Sonic the Hedgehog."

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Picture This: A Sneakier Kind of Spam

A new strain of spam popping up in e-mail boxes is confounding consumers and corporate security officials.

The spam contains images spouting everything from stock scams to Viagra, and its volume has more than doubled since April, according to analysis by anti-spam vendor IronPort Systems.

Image-based spam accounts for 21% of all spam, compared with just 1% in late 2005, IronPort says.

Marketers are deploying image-based spam because it is harder to detect than text-based spam, and consumers are more likely to read an e-mail with a picture or graphic, says Craig Sprosts of IronPort.

The newest spam uses technology that varies the content of individual messages - through colors, backgrounds, picture sizes or font types - so they appear to be distinct to spam filters. The spam is delivered to consumers and companies through millions of compromised PCs, called bots.

As a result, the messages are like snowflakes: No two are alike, says Julian Haight, founder of anti-spam organization SpamCop.

The surge in new spam has largely eluded software filters and eaten up space on e-mail systems because each message is more than seven times

larger than regular spam, Sprosts says.

Most image-based spam comes in the form of stock scams, which contain the same basic language within a shaded box.

Much of it comes from spam gangs in the USA and Russia, Sprosts says.

Stock scams make up about 20% of spam - about twice the share at the start of the year, IronPort says.

Until last year, image spam was rare. Though it had been around for about four years, spammers lacked the technology to randomize images, says Dmitri Alperovitch of e-mail security company CipherTrust. Before, spammers included a link on e-mail spam to direct recipients to a site containing pictures.

Not anymore. The new spamming tactic is the latest salvo in the battle between junk e-mailers and filter developers. As software gets better at identifying and blocking spam, spammers get smarter at outfoxing software.

"It is a never-ending cat-and-mouse game," Alperovitch says.

#### U.S. Tops List of 'Dirty Dozen' Spam-Relaying Nations

For the first time in over two years, the United States failed to reduce the amount of spam, placing it at the top of the list of spam-relaying countries, according to a report released by security firm Sophos. Spammers in the U.S. are responsible for 23.2 percent of spam received by Sophos' global network of spam traps, up from 23.1 percent in the first quarter of 2006.

China follows the U.S. in the number-two spot with 20 percent of global spam, while South Korea rounds out the top three with only 7.5 percent. Both these nations, Sophos said, have reduced the amount of spam originating from their countries since the security firm released their first quarter report. At that time, China was responsible for 21.9 percent of spam worldwide.

"Since the introduction of the CAN-SPAM legislation in 2004, we've seen a regular quarter-on-quarter drop in the proportion of spam coming from the U.S. - until now, that is," said Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant at Sophos.

The bulk of the world's spam is relayed by "zombies," or botnet computers, hijacked by Trojan horses, worms and viruses under the control of hackers, Sophos reported. PC owners are generally not aware that their PCs are being used to send spam.

One of the tricks spammers use to disguise their activities and reduce their chances of having their "collar felt by the long arm of the law," according to Cluley, is to not use their own computers to send the spam. Instead, they relay their spam through innocent people's computers.

"So, for instance, spammers in Russia could exploit poorly protected home computers in America to send out their advertising messages," Cluley explained. "Aunt Hilda could be sending out adverts for performance-enhancing drugs without being aware of it."

Although Russia did not rank in the "dirty dozen" of spam-relaying countries, the Sophos report uncovered evidence that suggests Russian spammers may be controlling immense networks of "zombie" PCs. A recently discovered Russian spamming price list offered e-mail distribution to some 11 million Russian e-mail addresses for just \$500, or distribution to one million addresses in any country for a paltry \$50.

The report also found that spammers are using increasingly sophisticated techniques to outwit anti-spam filters and bilk the unwary out of their money. One key development in 2006 has been the increase in spam containing images up from 18.2 percent in January to 35.9 percent in June. Using images rather than text, spammers are able to avoid detection by anti-spam filters that rely on the analysis of textual spam content.

So-called pump-and-dump e-mail scams are also on the rise. Sophos estimated that 15 percent of all spam e-mails fall into that category, compared with only 0.8 percent in January 2005. The sham e-mails are designed to pump up the value of a company's stock so that spammers can make a quick profit. Many of these spam scams also use images in their messages.

"It's incredible what people will believe when they receive it in a nicely formatted e-mail, which they would never believe if some nutter came up to them at the mall," Cluley said. "In one example, a recent stock spam campaign saw the share price rise over 500 percent as a result."

Although eliminating spam is not likely, companies and individuals can dramatically reduce the amount of spam they receive by properly protecting themselves and following best practices to minimize exposure. Home users need to properly protect their computers with up-to-date security patches, firewalls and anti-virus software to make sure that "unlike Aunt Hilda" they are not helping the spammers by having a computer that is easy for them to exploit, Graham advised.

"Given the number of arrests, and the huge fines dished out to guilty spammers, it's hard to criticize the U.S. for failing to take action," Cluley said. "Perhaps the reality is that the statistics can't be reduced further unless U.S. home users take action to secure their computers and put a halt to the zombie PC problem."

#### Yahoo To Offer Norton Security Software

Yahoo will provide an extra measure of protection to its customers by offering Norton Internet security software. The Norton software, produced by Symantec, includes protection against the most common cyber threats, such as spyware, spam, and identity theft. It is intended to be used while users shop online, handle their e-mail messages, or do their online banking.

The two companies will provide a co-branded version of Symantec's Norton Internet Security package that is integrated with the Yahoo toolbar, Yahoo e-mail, and HotJobs services. It includes Norton AntiVirus and Norton Personal Firewall for detecting and blocking spyware, viruses, and nuisance adware.

"Our users want to feel safe online and not have to put a lot of work into feeling safe," Yahoo spokesperson Nicole Leverich said. "With the Norton



Internet package we are providing an easy way to add comprehensive protection."

Leverich said it's not uncommon for Yahoo to partner with technology providers who are specialists in their respective fields. "They are great at security, so it makes sense to let Symantec do what it does best while allowing us to focus on what we do best, which is provide an array of Internet services to our subscribers." Yahoo users can receive a free 30-day trial of Norton Internet Security, after which a 12-month subscription will cost US\$49.99.

Secure Web surfing and e-mail handling is a priority for all Web portals, and most are taking steps to keep their customers satisfied. AOL recently rolled out its own Total Care package, with third-party assistance. Microsoft offers Windows OneCare Live, and Google also has a partnership with Symantec.

"All ISPs should offer strong security measures, and most of them are already doing so, because most people aren't educated about protecting themselves," Yankee Group analyst Johathan Singer said. With some 81 percent of PC users surfing the Web without any of the recommended precautions, there is no such thing as too many vendors hawking security solutions, he added.

#### Security Software Expands Protection

A new generation of security software embodying a holistic vision of PC health is right around the corner. Besides offering updated security features, new software from AOL, McAfee, Microsoft, and Symantec promises backup services and PC tuning utilities, with a different, yearly service type of pricing.

Microsoft kicked off the new trend at the end of May with its launch of Windows Live OneCare, which combines antivirus, antispyware, and firewall tools with Windows' defragging and cleanup utilities in one easy-to-use interface. OneCare also backs up data to CDs, DVDs, and external hard drives - though not to network drives or online storage.

McAfee's beta version of Total Protection offers a new backup feature in addition to traditional security, with 1GB of online storage. Not to be outdone, established security companies McAfee and Symantec are assembling competing offerings; even AOL is throwing its hat into the ring. McAfee's new all-in-one package, Total Protection, came out in public beta in June, with a final version scheduled for late summer. Symantec's entry, Norton 360, should appear by March 2007; and on July 13, AOL unveiled a members-only beta of its Total Care suite. AOL will make the final version of Total Care available to nonsubscribers, though the company is not commenting on pricing; no final release date has yet been announced.

Norton 360 will include proactive antiphishing protection that analyzes sites for fraudulent behavior. In addition to firewall, antispyware, and antivirus protection (AOL uses McAfee's engine for antivirus scanning), all three new products will add varying types of antiphishing features. OneCare lacks these defenses, probably because they're built into the new Internet Explorer 7. Like IE 7, AOL's limited feature blocks known phishing Web sites; McAfee's and Symantec's more sophisticated offerings can also analyze other Web sites and rate the sites' safety.

AOL, McAfee, and Symantec are also trying to outdo OneCare by supplementing their backup services with online storage. McAfee's Total Protection beta currently comes with 1GB of online storage. Symantec is still firming up pricing and features for its online backup service, and AOL says that it will be offering online backups, but not in time for the July 13 beta.

Priced at \$50 per year for three PCs, OneCare is less expensive than traditional security suites, which tend to run \$50 and up for a single PC (plus a yearly antivirus subscription fee). The cost covers all software updates, too; most traditional products do not. Clearly, consumers have found Microsoft's package enticing: According to NPD Group, a market research firm, OneCare ranked among the top eight pieces of software sold in the United States during its first two weeks on retail shelves.

Chris Swenson, director of software industry analysis for NPD Group, expects similar pricing for Total Protection and Norton 360, though neither McAfee nor Symantec has specified prices. He also anticipates improved customer service as the companies compete. Microsoft offers free phone-based tech support, compared to McAfee's \$3-per-minute and Symantec's \$30-per-incident phone support. Symantec is building real-time chat into its products, and AOL says its pricing will vary depending on the level of support it provides.

Microsoft's giant leap into the security software market caused quite a shake-up - and according to Swenson, that's a positive thing: "Consumers will benefit in the end."

#### Judge OKs \$90 Million 'Click Fraud' Settlement

An Arkansas judge Thursday approved a \$90 million settlement between Google Inc. and advertisers who claimed the Internet search engine company improperly billed them for "clicks" that didn't lead to genuine customers seeking their products.

Miller County Circuit Judge Joe Griffin called the settlement "fair, reasonable and adequate" and downplayed claims it hurt small advertisers. More than 70 objections were filed, with smaller companies saying they didn't have the resources to prove "click fraud" losses.

By settling claims made in the plaintiffs' class-action lawsuit, Google will give advertising credits that are the equivalent of a \$3.80 refund on every \$1,000 spent in its advertising network during the past 4 1/2 years.

No one will receive cash except the lawyers, who will split \$30 million.

Some of the plaintiffs went before Griffin on Monday to argue that Google hadn't taken reasonable care to prevent click fraud and overstated the steps it has taken against would-be swindlers. Click fraud drives up advertisers' costs by falsely indicating the number of Web users who have "clicked" on an Internet ad.

A Texarkana company - Lane's Gifts and Collectibles - filed the lawsuit, which Griffin certified as a class action. Google did not admit liability in the case, which also involves other Internet companies whose cases continue.

Calls to Lane's Gifts and Collectibles lawyer John C. Goodson were not immediately returned Thursday.

Google lawyer Nicole Wong said the company was pleased by Griffin's decision.

"We look forward to continuing to manage invalid clicks effectively and provide our advertisers with an outstanding return on their investment," she said in a statement.

Google lawyer Daralyn Durie had told Griffin this week that 19 of the company's 20 largest advertisers had agreed to the settlement and urged its approval.

Brian Kabateck, a California-based lawyer who has sued Google for click fraud in a similar class-action lawsuit in San Francisco and objected to the Texarkana settlement, said he was disappointed with a decision awarding plaintiffs what he calculated to be a half-cent on the dollar.

"We just don't think it was fairly disclosed," Kabateck said from Los Angeles. "I suspect there's going to be a lot of happy lawyers in Texarkana. I bet the planes are landing at the Texarkana municipal airport right now carrying the cases of Dom Perignon."

Kabateck, who had some clients in the Texarkana case, said he plans to appeal Griffin's decision.

In his ruling, Griffin said he based his decision on the strength of Lane's case, Google's ability to pay, the potential expense of further litigation and the limited amount of opposition.

Those who opposed the settlement said the agreement switched the burden of proof to them, and argued they didn't have the resources to easily pursue their claims. Griffin said, however, their task wouldn't be impossible.

"The settlement class is not required ... to submit records or documents that they simply do not possess," Griffin wrote. "The settlement class is not burdened or discouraged from filing claims because they are required only to provide information to the best of their knowledge in submitting a claim form."

Daralyn Durie, an attorney representing Google, said the majority of class members have agreed to the settlement, including 19 of the company's 20 largest advertisers.

In Internet advertising, clicking on ads or windows - typically displayed at the top and sides of Web pages - triggers sales commissions even if the activity doesn't lead to a sale. Click fraud cropped up several years ago as a way to drain advertising budgets or funnel illicit revenue to Web sites.

An independent report filed in court last week said while Google appears to be doing reasonably well protecting advertisers from scam artists preying upon Internet advertisers, it remains unclear how much the system is being bilked by click fraud.

Since 2001, the ads have generated \$15.7 billion in revenue for Google and its partners, turning the Mountain View, Calif.-based company into one of the world's most prized businesses.

Under the settlement, if advertisers do not claim the full amount available, a portion would be made available to charitable organizations. Griffin also said 556 advertisers notified him they did not want to participate in the class-action lawsuit.

## U.S. Struggles to Fight Online Child Porn

The U.S. has the dubious honor of hosting more online child porn sites than anywhere in the world, according to an international agency that tracks such sites.

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) reports that some 50 percent of online child pornography can be traced to U.S. sites, compared to 15 percent in Russia, 12 percent in Japan, and 0.2 percent in the UK. The foundation also noted that some Web sites containing child abuse content remain accessible for up to five years despite being reported to authorities.

Figures for the U.S. can be attributed to the fact that it has the most ISPs and handles the most Internet traffic, according to the IWF.

During the first half of this year, the IWF said it received 14,000 reports of online child pornography, up 24 percent from the year-ago period. The increase was attributed to public intolerance of child abuse content along with an increased awareness of the agency's role in combating the problem.

In a statement, IWF chief executive Peter Robbins said, "2006 is proving to be our busiest year yet; with record reports processed and a record number of Web sites confirmed to contain child abuse content. In addition, more of our members are choosing to implement blocking mechanisms so their customers are protected from being inadvertently exposed to potentially illegal sites."

This report comes on the heels of an announcement last month that EarthLink, Microsoft, Yahoo, AOL, and United Online will contribute \$1 million and technical support to a Technology Coalition within the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), a 22-year old group that is a leader in this effort.

The coalition will develop and implement technology solutions to detect and disrupt the distribution of child pornography across the Internet. That effort will include a central clearinghouse of images and related information, developing better law-enforcement tools, and evaluating the technologies used by child predators.

Yankee Group analyst Laura DiDio noted in a recent interview that ISPs have collaborated before for similar efforts, including combating software piracy. "It's a good start," she said, "although I'd like to see Google and MySpace, among others, join them."

The fight against child pornography is an ongoing challenge, she noted. "The child porn industry, unfortunately, is something we'll never be able to declare complete victory against. This is the first generation with webcams and the Net, so parents, and companies, have to learn how to deal with this."

Mukul Krishna, an analyst at Frost & Sullivan pointed out that tech companies must take a scientific approach to the image-recognition system

at the core of the database effort. If a family is exchanging innocent pictures of a baby having a first bath, for example, the technology will have to be able to differentiate those images from child porn, he said.

### SearchHelp Offers Parents Remote Control Of Child's Computer

SearchHelp Inc. on Wednesday launched a Sentry Remote upgrade that allows parents to connect to their child's computer from another location to monitor its use and prevent inappropriate behavior or conversations.

In addition, the new capability allows parents to lock the computer or shut down an application, even from a mobile phone.

Sentry Remote can be configured to automatically close instant messaging or chat sessions when either party in a conversation uses certain words, phrases or slang. The application can also send email alerts or cell phone text messages to parents when inappropriate conversations occur.

In offering the software, SearchHelp, based in Bethpage, N.Y., is targeting parents looking for software to help prevent children from seeing Internet pornography or other objectionable materials, and having online conversations with potential pedophiles.

Sentry Remote is sold at major retailers, such as CompUSA, OfficeMax and Fry's Electronics. It's also available online through Search Help.

### Fake Google Site Hides Trojan Horse

Scammers have set up an exact copy of the download page for Google's Toolbar plug-in in an attempt to lure users to download a Trojan backdoor.

Reported by security outfit Surfcontrol, some versions of the scam even spoof the correct Google Toolbar web address for Internet Explorer, using Google's own redirection service in an attempt to hide the real, non-Google address.

The Trojan itself - W32.Ranky.FW - is designed to turn the PC into a bot zombie, and is spread using the conventional technique of asking recipients of a spam e-mail to follow an embedded link.

According to Surfcontrol, the version detected by the company fails because of poor programming or defective compilation, but it remains a proof-of-concept in how to attack users using a simple combination of convincing elements.

Outwardly simple, the scam has a clever combination of tricks. Although using parts of established Web sites is standard in phishing scams, it is relatively unusual to go to the length of reproducing an entire page precisely, in combination with a convincingly-spoofed web address.

The fact that the spammed e-mail appears to come from Google could convince recipients to follow the link.

Assuming that a re-engineered version appears - highly likely - once

infected, users will notice nothing untoward, although their PCs will have become part of a bot-controlled network.

Google has been attacked in similar way before. Last September, scammers faked the Google search page itself in order to aid the spread of a worm.

More recently, a Trojan attacked the company's adsense advertisements, replacing them, in-browser, with fake ones on any PC infected with the malware.

#### Microsoft Sees No Reason for Vista Shipment Delay

Microsoft Corp. said on Thursday it sees no reason why its new Windows Vista operating system would be delayed, but it stopped short of committing to its previously stated launch target.

"We will ship Windows Vista when it is available," Kevin Johnson, co-president of Microsoft's platforms and services unit, said at the company's annual financial analyst meeting.

"However, we are going to ship the product when it is ready and we are just going to take it milestone by milestone," he said of the upgrade to Windows, which sits on more than 90 percent of the world's personal computers.

Microsoft has already postponed the release of its new Windows for consumers until early 2007 - after the crucial holiday shopping season - to improve the system's quality.

Vista is set to ship to corporate customers this November.

Chairman Bill Gates stoked concerns over delays last month by predicting there was an "80 percent" chance that Vista would ship on time.

Uncertainty over when Microsoft will begin benefiting from the surge in revenue growth that typically accompanies a major Windows software upgrade led Microsoft's shares to dip as much as 60 cents, or 2.5 percent, to as low as \$23.77 in afternoon Nasdaq trading.

Goldman Sachs analyst Rick Sherlund said the cautious comments represent a delayed confirmation of his thesis that Microsoft will not begin to see revenue from the general availability of Windows Vista until March or April of 2007.

"When they hesitate, that's confirmation we were right," he said. Microsoft has consistently been this cautious in the past, an acknowledgment of its history of slipping a few months beyond initial targets for major software releases, he said.

"They hedged, they definitely hedged," said another Wall Street software analyst, who asked not to be named, of Microsoft's comments regarding its Windows Vista plans.

Johnson said he sees revenue from the core desktop Windows business growing 8 percent to 10 percent in the current fiscal year ending June 30, 2007. Windows, nearly a third of Microsoft's total revenue, should generate between \$14.3 billion and \$14.5 billion in fiscal 2007, he said.

"Explain why I'm paying 20 times for a stock that is growing at 10 with a whole lot of investments that are not really going anywhere," said Greg Palmer, head of equity trading at Pacific Crest Securities.

Chief Executive Steve Ballmer told analysts and reporters at the company's annual financial analysts' meeting here that Microsoft is confident it can build two great new businesses - online services and entertainment - on top of its industry-dominating desktop and server software businesses.

"We see incredible amounts of opportunity," Ballmer said.

The giant software company also reiterated that it expects to maintain its double-digit revenue growth in the coming year. Last week, Microsoft had forecast revenue in the fiscal year ending in June 2007 to grow 12 percent to 14 percent, to between \$49.7 billion and \$50.7 billion.

The new Microsoft is being built on "four pillars," Ballmer said. Upgrades to the company's two core products - the Windows operating system and Office applications suite - should act as engines to drive growth and buy it time to erect two new pillars - its Internet and Xbox game businesses.

Underscoring the leadership transition that is taking place at the company, Bill Gates, the company's co-founder and chairman, is missing from the annual analysts' meeting for the first time ever. He is vacationing in Africa, Ballmer said.

In mid-June, Microsoft announced that Gates planned to move from full-time involvement to part-time in 2008. The company split Gates' technology responsibilities between Chief Software Architect Ray Ozzie and Chief Research and Strategy Officer Craig Mundie.

#### Apple Releases Wireless Mighty Mouse

Apple today released a new wireless Mighty Mouse. The new cordless mouse aims to improve navigation on both desktop and notebook Macs, using Bluetooth technology. Like its wired predecessor, the new mouse has four programmable buttons, or touch sensors, for quick access to Mac OS X applications.

Among the cooler features of the cordless Mighty Mouse is a laser technology that the company says is 20 times more sensitive than standard optical mice for better tracking on smooth surfaces.

Priced at \$69, Apple's wireless Mighty Mouse includes up to four independently programmable buttons and a 360-degree clickable scroll ball that lets users move the cursor in any direction.

"This gives users even more flexibility when using a Mac," said Apple product manager Scott Broderick. "They can remove the clutter on their desks, and take the wireless Mighty Mouse with them to use with a MacBook when they're on the road."

With a single click on the upper right or left side of the mouse, users can instantly access the features menus found in Mac OS X. The other two other buttons are activated by pressing the scroll ball and squeezing its sides, and can be programmed to connect with Apple's Spotlight, Dashboard and

Expos applications.

The wireless device uses either one or two AA batteries, to save weight, and can be configured for lefties or righties. It powers down automatically when not in use, and has an on/off switch to maintain battery life.

Broderick said the wireless Mighty Mouse complements the Apple's wireless, Bluetooth-enabled keyboard, and he noted that all of the company's latest notebook computers, as well as the Mac mini and other desktops, all feature Bluetooth short-range mobile technology.

The new device requires Mac OS X Tiger version 10.4.6 or later to configure the buttons for access to Spotlight, Dashboard and Expos , or to launch applications.

Apple isn't alone in cutting the cord on computer peripherals. Arch rival Microsoft earlier this year introduced a Wireless Laser Desktop package for Mac that includes a cordless keyboard and a laser mouse.

Microsoft is touting its mouse as "high definition," saying that it is two generations ahead of other competing optical devices in terms of precision and responsiveness. Similar to Apple's Might Mouse, Microsoft's mouse features a tilt wheel for moving around large documents and a slider that lets you zoom in for viewing in greater detail.

#### "Adult" Web Company Launches MySpace-styled Site

The operators of an X-rated online video game on Wednesday debuted Uthervers.com, an adults-only site that aims to duplicate the success of wildly popular teen hangout MySpace.com.

Owners of the new site, who recently launched RedLightCenter.com, expect to have more than 1 million registered users by the end of 2006 and encourage members to upload erotic photos and to complete fantasy profiles.

Brian Shuster, chief executive of Uthervers.com Inc., said people under the age of 18 are banned from using the new social networking site - a move that should help the upstart online community avoid MySpace.com's No. 1 pitfall: pedophiles.

Teenagers, young adults and some full-fledged adults have flocked to News Corp.'s MySpace property to socialize, share interests and find dates.

But the site has also been fertile ground for some sexual predators, who have attracted the attention of parents and U.S. law enforcement following multiple reports of sexual assaults to minors.

Shuster said Uthervers.com's uses credit-card age verification and has people monitoring the site, scouring it for postings from minors to ensure safety.

"Our users can feel safe and relaxed in the knowledge that they are dealing with other adults," he said.



## Windows Genuine Annoyance?

A Microsoft program designed to thwart software piracy has instead opened a Pandora's box of privacy concerns. PC users cried foul when Microsoft's Windows Genuine Advantage (WGA) software frequently phoned home to Microsoft servers and apparently flagged some legitimate copies of the Windows operating system as pirated. The incident spawned two lawsuits and has raised concerns about what Microsoft is adding to its software updates.

WGA consists of two parts. WGA Validation is required for downloading some pieces of software from Microsoft Web sites, but Microsoft says that it is not required for receiving critical security fixes through Automatic Updates. The software sends a PC's Windows license key to Microsoft, which checks the key against ID numbers in a database of putatively pirated copies of the OS.

If the software discovers a match, users receive a recurring alert from WGA Notifications warning them that they are running an illegitimate copy of Windows. But the program doesn't prevent the user from continuing to run Windows. As yet, WGA Notifications (rolled into Automatic Updates in April) is not a mandatory download.

In June, Lauren Weinstein, who is a cofounder of the Internet information and discussion resource group People for Internet Responsibility, found out that WGA Notifications sent data to Microsoft every time someone rebooted an affected PC.

A June 29 Microsoft statement confirmed that some PCs working with a version of WGA Notifications installed during the pilot phase checked a server-side configuration setting at each log-in to determine whether WGA Notifications should run or not. Microsoft has since removed that version of WGA Notifications from its update servers; and the company has released instructions for uninstalling it.

Still, privacy experts debated whether these check-ins - and the initial lack of documentation about them - made the WGA program spyware.

Plaintiffs in two class-action lawsuits, one filed in California and the other in Washington, claim that WGA violates those states' antispyware legislation; but Weinstein doesn't buy the plaintiffs' argument.

"It's not stealing information or damaging [computers]," Weinstein reasons. "It's more a screw-up on Microsoft's part - one they've admitted."

In its statement, Microsoft reiterated that newer versions of WGA (distributed through Automatic Updates) do not connect to Microsoft after every reboot. Instead, they connect and validate keys at least once every 90 days, or whenever Microsoft rolls out an update to WGA. Microsoft has also denied rumors that WGA will eventually include a kill switch to stop unvalidated copies of the operating system from running.

Harvard spyware researcher Ben Edelman questions the appropriateness of Microsoft's decision to release a noncritical, non-security-related update to Windows users via the operating system's Automatic Updates mechanism.

"They are supposed to be security updates, and supposed to be robust, commercially viable code," Edelman says about the WGA service. "This was neither."

Other reports circulating through the Internet cited instances in which WGA had sent repeated piracy pop-ups to people who owned legitimate copies of Windows. Robert Grosshandler, the Evanston, Illinois-based founder of iGive.com, said his computer ran a legitimate copy of Windows prior to a service call. But upon the PC's return, he began getting WGA Notifications alerts.

"Who knows what had been done to the drive," Grosshandler mused. "[It] had been out of my hands for a while."

Grosshandler said that he made a single half-hour call to Microsoft to revalidate his license key. "Throughout, I was given the presumption of innocence," he says.

For users who are receiving invalid license pop-ups, Microsoft has provided a fix that may help them reset the license keys if their copy of Windows is legitimate. Other users may need to call the toll-free number displayed on the WGA Notifications dialog box.

Yet another option: Independent programmers have created RemoveWGA, a WGA Notifications removal tool that will exorcise the piracy-alert demons afflicting your PC.

#### YouTube Growth Continues To Soar

Video-sharing site YouTube attracted 19.6 million visitors in June, a 297 percent increase from January, a market research firm said Friday.

The site's growth has been even more dramatic in terms of number of Web pages viewed, Nielsen/NetRatings said. In June, that number rose 515 percent from January to 72.4 million. The average time spent at the site during the same period increased 64 percent to 28 minutes from 17 minutes.

On a week-to-week basis, the number of visitors to YouTube increased by 75 percent in the week ending July 16 to 12.8 million visitors.

Despite YouTube's phenomenal growth, some analysts have questioned whether the site can transition from a free service to one that can make money. Experts are skeptical that people visiting the Internet company's site would be willing to pay for content, and believe mainstream advertisers would likely avoid having their brands associated with the oftentimes edgy and racy content.

Nielsen found that men are 20 percent more likely to visit YouTube than women, and people between the ages of 12 and 17 years old are nearly 1.5 times more likely than the average Web user to go to YouTube.

#### Students Charged With Professor Prank

Two students each face up to a year in jail for a prank that involved hacking into a professor's computer, giving grades to other students and sending pizza, magazine subscriptions and CDs to the professor's home.

Lena Chen, 20, and Jennifer Ngan, 19, face misdemeanor charges of illegally

accessing computers. The pair, both students of California State University, Northridge, are scheduled to be arraigned Aug. 21.

An investigation showed the professor's network account had been accessed without her permission and grades were assigned to nearly 300 students, prosecutor Robert Fratianne said.

The professor's campus e-mail was being forwarded to an account established by Chen and Ngan, investigators said.

Prosecutors also alleged Chen and Ngan used personal identifying information found on the university system to order food, magazine subscriptions and a shipment of blank CDs to the professor's home. The professor was billed for the purchases but was not required to pay.

The school would not release the professor's name.

### Heat Wave Shuts Down MySpace Website

Americans are sweating out a searing heat wave that has caused major power outages from coast to coast and briefly knocked out the most popular US website MySpace.

Power shortages were reported in California, Missouri and New York, with the mercury hitting an unprecedented 48 degrees C (119 degrees F) over the weekend in Woodland Hills, part of the sprawling Los Angeles metropolitan region.

"This is clearly a historic weather pattern that we have not seen in 57 years," said Joe Desmond, undersecretary of energy affairs at the California Resources Agency.

"Voluntary conservation is making the key difference right now," he said after two days of power outages that stretched up the Pacific Coast, from Los Angeles in the south to San Francisco to the north and into California's Central Valley.

The heat knocked out the Los Angeles-based servers for the hugely popular personal web page host MySpace for several hours Monday after an area power outage and a backup generator failed, the company said.

In the Midwestern state of Missouri, 159,000 people remained without electricity amid boiling heat and humidity in the wake of two thunderstorms that hit the region over the past week and shut down power supplies.

And in New York City, where at least 6,000 people and 750 businesses in the Borough of Queens have been without electricity for nine days, an antiquated power grid has provoked bitter reactions among city residents.

The Los Angeles Times reported 13 heat-related deaths in California's Central Valley and four in southern California, mostly among the elderly.

High temperatures in Los Angeles averaged near 38 degrees C (100 degrees F) over the past two weeks, driving air conditioner use and taking nearly all of the state's electricity generation capacity.

California has a population of 36.1 million. Electricity demand hit a

record 50,538 megawatts on Monday.

"We are happy we got through yesterday (Monday), but please do not stop the conservation efforts," said Yakout Mansour, the chief executive officer of the Independent System Operator, which manages most of California's electricity grid.

Heat also helped a fire in a southern California forest to double in size over the past 24 hours, scorching some 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres), officials said Tuesday.

The blaze, which spread through the Cleveland National Forest 40 miles (65 kilometers) east of San Diego, was ignited Sunday by a campfire according to the California Department of Forestry (CDF). Spokeswoman Roxanne Provaznik said, "As the day heats up, we expect the same parts of the fire to come to life," she said.

California has lived under a power cuts threat since a 2001 crisis that was blamed in part on deregulation of the electricity sector.

Some parts of the electricity network date back to the 1930s. Los Angeles officials acknowledge that some stress stems from a lack of investment going back years.

On the opposite side of the country, close to 100,000 people in New York City were without power over the weekend one week after city power supplier Consolidated Edison was hit by breakdowns.

Some streets were taken over by refugees from the blackouts, with the Red Cross providing food, water and ice to people seeking relief from the heat. Doctors made their rounds along sidewalks, while residents vented frustration with city authorities.

"It's surreal. This is New York City and it shouldn't be this way with the taxes and utility bills we pay," Peter Hidasi, a Queens resident, told the USA Today daily.

#### Laptops in Tow, More Americans Work on Vacation

The number of Americans who work during their vacations has nearly doubled in the last decade, with the laptop computer replacing the cellular phone as the most useful tool for working on holiday.

Some 43 percent of office workers said they work on vacation, compared with 23 percent in a survey taken in 1995, said the poll conducted for Grand Rapids, Michigan-based Steelcase Inc., a designer and maker of office furniture.

Overall, roughly one in four employees said they spent three or more hours working during vacation. Most said they were committed to the job or had a pressing assignment, while 10 percent cited an inability to relax until things were taken care of.

Edward Hallowell, a psychiatrist and author of "Crazy Busy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap!," said the trend likely includes people who keep working for good reasons as well as bad.

"The good way would be someone who says, 'Look, I really want to get away with my kids, but I do have work to do... I'm going to combine work and vacation,'" he said.

"The bad one would be someone who is just so addicted to work that they can't ever leave it. It's their only way of amusing themselves, and that's a problem," he said.

Technology, not unsurprisingly, makes all that work possible, although it has changed over the last decade.

In the latest survey, 41 percent of workers said their laptop computer made it easiest to work on holiday, followed by their cellular phone, personal computer and BlackBerry.

In 1995, most people cited their cell phone first, along with their beeper, fax machine, laptop and personal computer.

"These tools can be very freeing," Hallowell said. "They can allow you to go away, but they can also be enslaving. It's all a matter of how you use them."

The survey of 640 randomly selected full- or part-time workers was conducted in June by telephone. It was conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation.

It also found that only 61 percent of Americans use all of the vacation time they have coming to them.

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